Pneumonia is a deadly disease, especially for children in developing countries. It is a severe infection that affects lungs and makes it difficult for the lungs to absorb oxygen.

- Worldwide, nearly 1.6 million children under the age of 5 years die of pneumonia annually; 98% of these children who die of pneumonia live in developing countries.\(^1\)
- According to 2008 estimates, about 177,000 children under the age of five died of pneumonia in Nigeria.\(^2\) This number is highest in Africa and second highest overall in the world.\(^2\)
- Pneumonia is caused by bacteria, viruses and other microorganisms. The most common causes of fatal pneumonia are Pneumococcus and Haemophilus Influenzae type B (HiB).\(^3\) These bacteria are responsible for up to half of childhood pneumonia deaths.\(^4\)

Pneumonia causes needless suffering and stress

- There are an estimated 56 million episodes of lung infections among Nigerian children every year.\(^3\) Although, not all episodes will lead to death, these infections nevertheless cause suffering and require treatment.
- Pneumonia is an economic burden for families and communities, contributing to the cycle of poverty.

The good news!

Pneumonia is a problem with solutions

- We can protect children from pneumonia and many other diseases through exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months of life.\(^5\)
  In Nigeria, only 20% of babies are exclusively breastfed, this needs to be improved.\(^6\) Other strategies to protect include: good nutrition, hand-washing, and reduced indoor air pollution.\(^5\)
- We can prevent pneumonia with new and effective vaccines against HiB and pneumococci.\(^5\)
- With help from GAVI, many countries in Africa now provide or will soon provide the HiB vaccine.

- A pneumococcal conjugate vaccine has already been introduced in Rwanda, The Gambia, and South Africa. Thanks to a new and clever way to fund vaccines called the Advance Market Commitment (AMC), more low-income countries will soon have access to this new generation vaccine.
- The Nigerian government is striving to include HiB and pneumococcal vaccines into the national immunization program with GAVI’s support.\(^7\)
- Other preventive strategies include: vaccination against measles and pertussis (i.e. whooping cough), zinc supplementation, HIV prevention, and antibiotic prophylaxis for people with or exposed to HIV.\(^8\),\(^9\),\(^10\)

Children should have access to effective and affordable treatment

- Treatment for most types of serious pneumonia is usually antibiotics, which typically cost less than 150 Naira per dose. Effective case management strategies can help to ensure that children receive the right treatment for pneumonia quickly.\(^11\)

- In Nigeria, only an estimated 1 of every 5 children with pneumonia receives appropriate antibiotics.\(^12\) Health policies and services should be designed to provide children prompt and effective treatment for pneumonia.

You can ACT NOW to fight pneumonia!

- Raise awareness about pneumonia among leaders and health providers
- Educate the public to recognize pneumonia and seek proper treatment
- Focus resources on this neglected disease
- Ensure pneumonia is a policy priority
- Proclaim November 12\(^{nd}\) as World Pneumonia Day 2010

It’s time to stand up, speak out and join the fight against child pneumonia.
Take action now to help save the lives of thousands of children in Nigeria.
Pneumonia Facts: Nigeria

References


For more information on World Pneumonia Day Coalition, visit the following website: http://worldpneumoniaday.org/about-us/who-we-are/

To join the coalition, visit the following website:

For individuals: http://worldpneumoniaday.org/join-us/individuals/

For organizations: http://worldpneumoniaday.org/join-us/organizations/

Send us an email to afronetforchildren@yahoo.com for more information on the coalition in Africa.